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POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT IN A
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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) <p>→ Maximizing the full capabilities of each US Army soldier at every level of command has always been important; but it is especially so during the decade of the '80s when a period of modernization and transition takes place. This can be best accomplished where an environment exists which maximizes the full capability of each soldier. The key is communications management. The author develops this important subject and its effects as a motivator and further analyzes how better listing techniques assist in accomplishing this goal → <i>all</i></p>		

20. Abstract (cont) The communicative suggestions made in this essay will assist you in solving many of the problems incumbent with force modernization and in managing. The communicative challenges of today's complex Army are little understood by military managers and until serious efforts are made to communicate more effectively, efficiency, morale and productivity will suffer.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT
IN A CHANGING ARMY

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH ESSAY

by

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Armor

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CHAPTER I

The decade of the 80's will be a period of modernization and transition for the Army unlike any which the Army experienced in the past. "Successful modernization is our only assurance that over time, we will be prepared for the many diverse tasks we may be called upon to accomplish,"¹ according to General E. C. Meyer, Army Chief of Staff.

This modernization process goes a long way in upgrading general capability and remedying overall equipment shortages. It will involve a total Army team effort with the receipt of new doctrine, to revised training bases and the receipt of approximately 500 new systems. This unique modernization effort will provide an excellent opportunity for Army managers at all levels to share in the many tasks required to rebuild the Army.

The battlefield of the future will be complex and extended far beyond anything we have known in the past. Integrated systems representing all services will give the individual soldier more independence of operation than he has had before. New doctrine will emerge to exploit enemy vulnerabilities and these challenges will be met under continued high levels of personnel turbulence and other routine conditions that distract from training.² Modernization translates to individual and unit training on new equipment and will require revised policies, plans and philosophies to implement the change effectively.

This giant step into the future will require an environment which maximizes the full capabilities of each soldier at every level. Soldiers must understand exactly what is happening in the Army—new responsibilities

and new independence never known before. Even with this modern equipment and technology, the individual soldier is still the most important element in our Army.

Nothing will ever replace his effectiveness which has been developed and tempered with field training, mosquito bites, diesel fumes, dust-covered bodies and common sense.³ If our soldiers are not adequately informed, the paradox we face in modernization is that we may well have lost, rather than gained, in our capability to command and control our new Army. For this reason, it is imperative that effective communications be used at every level to insure that soldiers fully understand their new charters in the modern Army.

Personal communications is one of the least understood and applied skills at our disposal, yet it is at the core of every problem whether individual or systemic. Knowing how to communicate with soldiers is singularly the most effective means we have to insure success on the future battlefield. Our interface with others must be continuous, clear and candid if we are to get our message across in an understandable and effective manner. Never in the history of the Army has this been more important as now, when we are embarking on a massive modernization program which will change the complexion of the Army.

Obviously, there is a direct relationship between effective management and good communication. This important relationship transfers to all segments of an organization and is especially important during periods of rapid change. If effective communication is achieved, with it comes a more effective organization.

Poor communication is a prime contributor to inefficiency whether concerned with commanders, staff officers, young soldiers or the public. Communication is a hard, tough, demanding and one of the least understood

skills with which we deal. Most of a leader's work is done by communicating. Yet, very little training is done in this area.

With the modernization of the Army, monumental problems must be resolved in communicating change. This will involve the transmission, reception and interpretation of messages at every level in the Army. Skill at effectively communicating can appreciably enhance the modernization effort.

This paper will discuss specific areas of personal communication which, if used effectively, will assist in the transition to the Army of the future.

COMMUNICATION AS A MOTIVATOR

Today's Army leadership will set the pace for motivating soldiers in this era of transition. Currently, over 80 percent of our soldiers are highly motivated, high school graduates and commanders are reenlisting only those who have proved themselves worthy.⁴ These are the same soldiers who have grown up in a world of instant information fed by television, computers and satellites. These soldiers perform exceedingly better if they know the who, what, why, where and when of their tasks. Accordingly, we must insure that every soldier is convinced that what he is doing is important. The integration of 500 new systems into the Army will demand more teaching, training and informing than at any other time in the Army.

The Army has a formal system of transmitting information from higher to lower levels. It is called command information or internal information and stated simply, is the communication between a commander and his military "family."⁵ Knowing who encompasses the internal audience helps determine the best methods to use in transmitting a given message and the specific segments of the audience which should receive the message. This

is called "targeting a message" and is essential to the internal communication process. "Targeting" a message means to compose and transmit information in such a way that it reaches a specific, definable audience in understandable terms.

Information tools used in this process include newspapers, fact sheets, base guides, pamphlets and magazines. Electronic media include radio, television, films, videotapes, broadband communication and recordings.

A well-informed audience is better motivated and thus more productive. Use of this formal program, is important in our transition to a modernized Army, but there are not enough personnel or research facilities available to provide all reference material needed to respond and guide information needs during this period. The unique and unknown problems which emerge will require that the commander at every level use his communicative processes to transmit the local information needed to motivate his soldiers.

In 1977 and 1978, the Army conducted a Division Restructure Study (DRS) with the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. The test basically examined new organization, equipment and tactics of a brigade test organization. This type of operation is one that exemplifies a major challenge for which a formal, structured internal information program could not be 100 percent effective due to unknown changes and developments which occur as the test proceeds--not unlike moving into the uncharted waters of modernization.

The DRS test was deemed successful, but after action reports indicated that one of the major shortcomings and frustrations was failure to keep soldiers informed about the details of purpose and change for the study.⁶

It was noted that this failure contributed significantly to lowered morale and motivation of the participating soldiers.

The motivation required for success in modernizing the Army will come from the lower echelon leaders in the field who directly implement the changes in policy, programs and equipment. These leaders and the effectiveness of their communication with subordinates will govern the speed and effectiveness of placing the new Army on track. Command information, publications and off-the-shelf information will certainly enhance this task, but the ultimate spark will come from the leaders who are in place in the field where things really happen.

How do we motivate our soldiers so they will want to participate in this change? It is probably not by one single device, whether extra pay, promotion or shorter working hours. I think we can get a person to turn on his motivator motor when he is in tune with things that truly interest him. Peter Drucker says that man needs a challenge and he needs to know that he contributes.⁷ Our knowledgeable soldiers are satisfied only when both these elements are achieved, and this is where communication as a motivator can assist you.

Most of the information transmitted in the Army consists of serial message transmissions.⁸ For example, A communicates a message to B; B then communicates A's message (or his interpretation of A's message) to C; and so on. As this message is passed down, it tends to fan out and become distorted. Regardless of its direction, the number of conveyors involved, and the degree of its conformance and understanding, serial transmission is clearly an essential, inevitable form of communication in the Army.

It should be equally apparent that serial transmissions are especially

vulnerable to disruption and distortion. Accordingly, we must view several methods by which we can improve communications and thus motivate our soldiers.

As B conveys A's message to C, he may be influenced by at least three motives of which he may not be aware:

- The desire to simplify the message. People do not like to convey detailed messages and therefore unconsciously simplify the message before it is passed along. It is very probable that among the details most susceptible to omission, are those we already knew or in some way assumed the receiver knew.⁹

- The desire for the communication of a "sensible" message. We are reluctant to relay a message that appears incomplete, illogical or incoherent. It can be embarrassing to admit that one does not fully understand the message he is conveying. Accordingly, one tends to "make sense out of it" before passing it along.

- The desire to make the message as painless as possible to the receiver. We do not enjoy passing along bad news or difficult assignments and often tend to dilute it to the point of making the message inaccurate.

These motives effectively serve as a shield to incipient problems in face-to-face communications, distort effective management and curtail motivation. As leaders with communicative responsibilities, we must take special care not to omit or alter details which detract from the intent of our message.

Army modernization efforts will involve massive exchanges of information at all levels involving equipment, reorganizations training and support functions. There will be unprojected problems and incorrect information will flow throughout the Army. Only commanders and leaders at action levels will be able to effectively sort out this problem. If the proper

information is sorted out quickly and transmitted properly, the result will be smoother transition and higher levels of motivation. The following techniques are suggested to assist in motivating soldiers during modernization:

- Communicate details in order. Organized information is easier to understand and to remember. Select an appropriate sequence to the content of your message and be consistent with it. Your purpose may be best suited by beginning with a proposal followed by supporting reasons or to start with the reasons and work toward the proposal. In either case, be sure to keep proposals and reasons clearly distinguished rather than mixing them.

- Slow your oral transmission. By slowing your transmission, the receiver (listener) has a better opportunity to assimilate complex and detailed information. It is possible, however, to speak too slowly thereby losing the attention of your receiver. Therefore, watch your receiver for clues as to your most effective rate of speech.

- Make the message simple. This suggestion will apply in most cases. With respect to oral communication, there is evidence that beyond a point the addition of details leads to disproportionate omission. Too much information or detail will add to confusion.¹⁰

- Emphasize the important. This suggestion is absolutely key to effective communication. Presumably, the originator of the message should have the ability to sift out what is really important and what is not. This should be given vocal emphasis or attention-drawing phrases such as "this is the bottom line. . . ." This element is extremely important during modernization in that many soldiers will be confused regarding priorities of their missions. For example, if a tank battalion is required to prepare several tracked vehicles for turn-in and this project requires a

major maintenance effort to the detriment of unit vehicles, the "why" should be explained. Emphasizing that the vehicles are needed for priority readiness reasons, deployment or whatever will appreciably boost moral, answer the "why" and thus enhance motivation.

LISTENING

Modernization of the Army is complex and involves numerous tasks. New equipment is coming on line, forces for "Division 86" must be reorganized, National Guard and Reserve units will be getting new equipment and receiving displaced equipment from the active forces and the introduction of the regimental system and the continuation of stability programs such as COHORT are in progress.¹¹

In addition to motivating our soldiers during this transition, we must also insure that we as leaders listen carefully and evaluate the feedback they transmit to us as we go about modernizing the Army. They will generate valid criticisms and suggestions that may be of potentially high value in improving the transition and we must listen to their ideas and employ them as required. We must also listen carefully to our instructions.

Some Army managers do not want to hear their soldiers because they are afraid of what they may find out. Surveys have shown that management had just as soon not hear the desire for change and grievances of their employees; yet, whether this feedback is heard or not, it will not go away.¹²

Listening to the feedback of our soldiers as a major ingredient of the communications process can contribute significantly in solving problems incumbent with modernization. Norbert Wiener, the mathematician, wrote that "speech is a joint game between the talker and the listener against the forces of confusion."¹³ Unless both make the effort, interpersonal communication is quite hopeless.

Some statistics will portray the extent to which people understand and remember what they hear. The listening ability of thousands of students and hundreds of business and professional people was examined. In each case, the people listened to a short talk and were later tested on their grasp of the content. The following conclusions were found:

1. Immediately after the average person has listened to someone talk, he remembers only about half of what he has heard--no matter how hard he thought he was listening.

2. University of Minnesota studies, confirmed by studies at Florida State and Michigan State,¹⁴ showed that two months later, people will only remember 25 percent of what was said. In fact, people tend to forget one-third to one-half of what they hear within eight hours. Simply stated, we can say that whenever we listen to someone talk we miss about half of what he tells us and two months later, remember only about one-fourth.

Another study from the University of Ohio¹⁵ showed that the average adult spends 70 percent of his waking time communicating in some form or another. It also showed that the average adult spent his communicative time, in the following manner:

9% writing

16% reading

30% speaking

45% listening

This means that almost half of our time and that of our soldiers is spent listening--yet most of us rarely give listening a serious thought and even more rarely attempt to interpret or examine the feedback given us by our soldiers.

Better listening habits are required by both Army leadership and by the soldiers with whom we communicate. Feedback is required at all levels and is of a higher quality if listening skills are honed. What can be done to make us more efficient at listening to the interpretation of our soldiers and how can we ourselves do a better job at listening:

- Look for Areas of Interest. Studies tell us that the major advantage for good listening is being interested in the topic under discussion. Since this is an uncontrollable factor, the key on the matter of interest in a topic is word use. We should look for worthwhile ideas that we can use to do our jobs better. Look for what is being said and how you can use it. Anything that is said which can be used to make you happier, and more efficient should fall right out of the conversation and be of value to you.

- Emphasize or concentrate on the content of the message. Forget the method of delivery if you are on the receiving end of a message. Concentrate on digging out the elements of importance which apply to you and don't let the method of presentation, appearance or personality of the speaker influence your thinking.

- Concentrate on basic themes. Poor listeners tend to concentrate only on facts in a presentation. Conversely, good listeners are able to concentrate on central themes, ideas or principles. Studies have shown that only about one-fourth of the listeners grasp the speaker's central idea or theme. In order to develop this skill, one must cultivate an ability to recognize conventional organizational patterns, transitional language and the speaker's use of recapitulation. This technique can be invaluable explaining or interpreting new policies such as will be experienced in modernization.

- Tune out distractions. We live in a fast-moving, noisy age where distractions not only distort our concentration by sound, but by sight and

emotion. A good listener must fight distractions. Whether it is closing a door, turning down a radio or moving to a location where visible distractors do not exist, we must move to fight distraction. This is particularly important to the military leader who finds himself imbedded in distraction by the nature of his profession.

- Use your speed thought to your best advantage. The normal person talks at a speed of about 125 words per minute, but the human mind can think at about four times that rate. Accordingly, one becomes bored and lost while listening. This excess time can be better utilized by trying to anticipate what the speaker is going to talk about. Additionally, you can mentally summarize what he is saying and weigh the speaker's evidence by mentally questioning it. Also read between the lines to see if you can apply something important to his concept that he may have omitted or overlooked. You may also read the changing inflection of his voice, or facial expressions as he goes through his talk and apply your interpretation to that.

Communicating With Our Soldiers

A main objective of communicating with our soldiers during Army modernization is to make the change to a new Army as smooth and efficient as possible. In today's Army, communication responsibilities are fragmented and found at every level of command; yet, communication permeates the entire institution and thus should be of the same consistency and quality throughout the Army.

Accurate and timely communication delivered through the appropriate channel will mean greater soldier understanding of Army objectives, policies and plans; increased soldier motivation; greater loyalty and increased productivity. Army leaders should understand this and realize that they

are the key to success or failure in this communication effort. These key leaders must also realize that people are different and have different filters through which they interpret information.

When a message is transmitted—whether verbal or non-verbal—it is distorted, adjusted and manipulated as it passes through individual filters of our soldiers. Therefore, in preparing our messages, we must be aware of these "filters" and each individual's sensitivity--this is "knowing your men!"

Once we understand that different people interpret messages based on their "filters" or frames of reference, we must be careful not to introduce unnecessary elements that may tend to overcomplicate the message. Any unnecessary element mentioned when giving instructions can prove to be a distraction. Consider the directions required for operating a camera. Have you removed all the unrelated and unnecessary items? If your requirement is to explain an organization change during modernization, it really isn't necessary to detail all staffing and manning procedures and higher headquarters guidance on how the new organization evolved. It is better to simply explain how it is now and how it's going to work. It is also important to not criticize the change—even if you don't necessarily agree with it—its there and any criticism of it will only complicate matters.

We do poorly in communicating by making our explanations more technical than required. It is not necessary to use words or jargon that will not be understood or relevant to our audience. Say what you need to say simply and quickly, and your chances for being misunderstood will diminish significantly.

Never be afraid to say "I don't know, I'll find out," when you don't know the answer to something. When you are in the driver's seat of imple-

menting change, there will be ample opportunity for you to misinterpret, taskings which you receive. It is human nature to resist admitting that we don't know something. If we don't understand the requirement and pass along information that may not be accurate we simply complicate the problem and the quality of our program suffers. If you are asked a question and do not know the answer to it, say so; and then get the answer. This will accomplish two things for you: first, it insures that accurate communication has taken place and secondly, it improves your credibility.

In the rush to get the job done, we sometimes fail to understand the directions we've been given. It is difficult to give or receive complex, accurate instructions given the different frames of reference and experience levels of those with whom we communicate. It is easy to "think" we understand when we really don't. Our desire to be presumed "in the know" often prevents us from understanding what has really been said.¹⁶ This must be understood and remembered whether we are on the sending or receiving end of a communication.

In summary, we must realize that when we communicate, we do not always understand the complexity of the message we're trying to transmit. It's like when we're asking for directions and someone briefly describes his interpretation of how to get there and says "you can't miss it." You can miss it and many times we do. We all suffer from what has been called the COIK (Clear Only If Known) fallacy.¹⁷ It's easy to get to the place you are inquiring about if you already know how to get there. Unfortunately, most of the time, we don't, and even more tragically either don't realize it or refuse to admit it.

Why We Must Communicate

Up to this point, I have discussed motivation, listening and talking to our soldiers. It is therefore appropriate that we now address what communication itself can do to assist us in our move into the modern Army.

Our Army consists of people—not organizational charts and Tables of Organization and Equipment. The Army cannot function without communication; yet, there is probably no other function about which so much discussion has produced so little results. Communication is the vital link in the chain of command and if used effectively, it can mean the difference between success and failure.

Although improvements in data processing are seemingly endless, basic communication has not begun to approach in importance or in scope the kind of communication upon which the Army depends. We are talking about an altogether human process of receiving and transmitting thoughts, ideas and meaning—the human element cannot be removed from this process.

With this introduction, let us discuss the "why" in communication. Business experts, communicators and efficiency experts tell us that an organization must communicate to promote understanding, productivity, teamwork and identity. These same elements apply to communication in the Army.

If ever there were a time in the Army to promote understanding, it is now as we embark on the biggest change in our history and deal with emerging technology. As we communicate to our Army, information must be made to have more meaning than merely a body of words.

Whatever it is that we are communicating with reference to modernization—or for that matter—anything else, must be explained in a manner so it is clear and comprehensible. This is necessary because comprehension is essential to motivation and efficiency.

Teamwork in an organization will not happen automatically. Its creation will be brought about by effectively communicating to each soldier his role and its relationship to the roles of others. This teamwork can be greatly enhanced by utilizing many of the techniques discussed previously in this paper. It is usually during the last step of the process, however, where the most difficulty occurs: getting the individual to properly apply the information he has been given.¹⁸

There are many reasons why we must communicate with our soldiers. Some are based on theory, but most are predicated on very real, practical needs. One of these, is his "need to know" the information. We discussed earlier the importance of cutting out unnecessary information in order to reduce confusion. This is still important. However, the need to know extends beyond providing the soldier with the essential facts necessary to do his job. Research has shown that there is a genuine desire on the part of organizations to know where their organization is going and what their relationship to that destination is. If this approach is taken to describe why and where the Army is going, it will be a positive force for the organization and the individual soldier.

One of the most overlooked problems in communicating is that communication takes place in an organization regardless of what its leadership does. This creates a need to direct information properly from the top. If the Army's lower-level leadership is not provided accurate, timely information, it will resort to informal channels to seek guidance. We must understand that there is the formal channel of information and the informal. If the formal mode is working properly, the informal will probably function accurately; if not, the chances for an effective final product are diminished significantly.

With massive organization, equipment and personnel changes incumbent with modernization, it is essential that we communicate only the required information. The following four kinds of information are almost always helpful and should be communicated:

- Information on policies, procedures and practices of force modernization.
- An update on current activities and progress regarding modernization.
- A review of where we are going to include organizational plans and objectives.

Enhancing this information is the quantitative decision of exactly what do our soldiers need to know. Since this will vary from case to case, broad assumptions must be used to help determine what information a given individual will require to perform properly.

Additional consideration should be given to what our audience (soldiers) want to know. This question begs a more qualitative response because it is a function of both an individual and circumstance. It is in this case that feedback is essential in order that we understand the perceptions which we are projecting. Upward communication must be open and continuous for this question to be answered fully.

The Army has always emphasized timeliness in its communication. There are several assumptions, however, which tend to influence leaders in specifying this timing. One of these assumptions is that communications should be as instantaneous as possible. This assumption is valid, but it fails to recognize that in every organization, there are obstacles which make the instantaneous flow of communications almost impossible. In the Army, this is the bureaucratic nature of information flow. We must recognize this and cut through the resistance as best we can, seeking to maintain timely and accurate information flow.

As a final point, I have a checklist which summarizes much of what I have covered in the essay. By following these guidelines, your organization will be well on its way toward blending the inseparable process of management and communication as you move down the road of force modernization:

- Make your communication clear from the standpoint of intent and fact.
- Be as concise as possible with your communication without jeopardizing its meaning.
- Make your message competitive enough to get the attention it deserves.
- Insure that your communication is candid in the facts and meaning it conveys.
- Capitalize on all the tools and techniques available to you in passing along your message.

The communicative suggestions made in this essay will assist you in solving many of the problems incumbent with force modernization and in managing. The communicative challenges of today's complex Army are little understood by military managers and until serious efforts are made to communicate more effectively, efficiency, morale and productivity will suffer.

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